

Summary and Unedited Public Comments for Chapter 14: Bikeways & Trails

9-19-17 CPC Work Session

Below is a summary of public comments with staff responses and actions along with the unedited comments for draft Chapter 14: Bikeways & Trails.

Summary of Public Comments for Chapter 14: Bikeways & Trails						
Comment Summary #	Comment Summary	Staff Response	Action			
			Incorporated	Not Incorporated	Another Chapter	Beyond Scope of Plan
1	Incentivize the private construction of bikeways and trails.	Agree – incentivized through ordinance.	X			
2 (2 comments)	Don't agree with spending on bikeways and trails.	Funding decisions are determined the Board of Supervisors outside of the plan.				X
3 (3 comments)	General support of bikeways and trails.	Agree	X			
4	Don't agree with county funding for equestrian trails.	The location of equestrian trails has not yet been determined and will involve future community outreach and research before funding occurs.				X
5	Consider use of floodplains and other constrained lands for trails.	Agree – This chapter considers these as potential options.	X			
6	Would like to see more trails in the Midlothian Area.	Midlothian Special Area Plan underway and will address.				X
7	Would like more specific trail location information.	Specific alignment and designs will be determined at time of funding and construction.				X

Summary of Public Comments for Chapter 14: Bikeways & Trails						
Comment Summary #	Comment Summary	Staff Response	Action			
			Incorporated	Not Incorporated	Another Chapter	Beyond Scope of Plan
8	This chapter lacks an emphasis on pedestrians.	Disagree – this chapter recommends establishing a safe and convenient network for people to walk and bike throughout the county. The preferred facility type recommended is a shared use path that accommodates both pedestrians and cyclists (as well as those who use wheelchairs or strollers). This chapter acknowledges that additional facilities and infrastructure (such as sidewalks and pedestrian signals) are needed.		X		
9	Concerned about lack of sidewalk connectivity between residences and destinations.	Agree – This chapter recommends improving connectivity.	X			
10	No mention of improving the safety of existing sidewalks.	Agree – added a separate guideline on BT 13 that discusses improving existing sidewalks in conjunction with revitalization efforts.	X			
11	Pre-driving teens should be added to list of range of pedestrians.	Disagree – this chapter accommodates needs of all ages and abilities.		X		
12	Need safe crosswalks and pedestrian signals along major roads.	Agree – this is discussed on BT 14 as well as Chapter 13: Transportation in the Street Design section.	X		X	
13	Concern that Comprehensive Plan views pedestrian infrastructure as an amenity or low priority.	Disagree – plan recommends bike/ped infrastructure as core component of road design, along with establishing trail network.	X		X	
14	Concerns with sidewalk connections in conjunction with potential transit.	Agree – this is addressed in the Transit section in Chapter 13: Transportation.	X		X	

Unedited Public Comments for Chapter 14: Bikeways & Trails

Comment Summary #	Unedited Comment
1	I don't know if this would fit into one of the chapters that we discussed or if it would be better suited for the Transportation chapter, but incentivizing the private sector to construct bikeways, trails, etc through offsets in the road cash proffer calculation would help achieve some of the connectivity and accessibility goals that are discussed in the Comp Plan. If I remember correctly, this was one of components of the new cash proffer policy that was passed by the Board in September, 2016.
2	Don't "overdo" by spending money on "bike and green ways". I believe very few use them and there are already plenty of places to walk and ride, unless you are a dedicated walker or rider and then you will probably go to a "trendy location". As an example, "Nobody uses the Bike Lane on RT 10 through Chester. One would have to be suicidal to do so. Don't let "trendy blue skies" overshadow actual need, practicality, and taxpayer money, even if it appears to be a "freeby" from "the Feds". Thanks
3-5	This plan has some good pieces. I love the thought of connected trails as an alternative to automotive transport. I'd offer two recommendations: First, using county funds to build equestrian trails will be a significant expense for very few users. Second, for the "off road" networks of trails, I would encourage you to research the Greenway system in Charlotte, NC. This system uses mostly flood plains and other land that would otherwise be undeveloped. A very well used and well respected system.
2	From Chapter 14: "The public outreach showed that there is an interest in walking and biking in Chesterfield County, with 88 percent of the online survey respondents wanting to walk more and 93 percent wanting to bike more than they do now." The paragraph just prior to this sounds like only 700 to 1000 people were reached; therefore, the percentages you are using would not be representative of all of Chesterfield County taxpayers. My husband and I do ride our bikes and I am a daily walker. I feel that our tax money would be better spent on many other priorities for the benefit of all rather than just a small number of residents. Your wording in the paragraph is correct when it states, "survey respondents WANT TO walk more and WANT TO bike more". Wanting to and actually making use of these pathways are two very different things. Most people will say, I want to or I should, but when it comes right down to it, they don't follow through. When the "pie-in-the-sky" idea of people walking or bike riding to shop, the number of participants decrease all the more. So throwing this idea out there is worthless because there would be so few who would not use their cars. This project is a big cost that continues year after year when you consider maintenance after the initial construction. We are totally against this misuse of our tax money.
3, 6	I highly support bikeways and trails in the County. I would like to see more separate shared use trails, county wide, but especially in the Midlothian area. It would be very nice to have a network of trails connecting parks and neighborhoods, or even retail areas. How cool would it be to be able to hop on my bike and ride to the store to pick up a few items. This would help overall home values, but also help support economic development by attracting larger businesses to an area that provides a very pedestrian and bike friendly community for their employees.

3, 7	<p>Hello! I am a proponent of new bikeways and trails, I just ask for more specific location information on the proposed "shared use paths" - can you update the map on page BT6 with street names please? I live in the Bon Air area, and on one of the maps for the Bon Air plan, there appeared to be a shared use path directly behind my house (along the Powhite Creek). I would like clarification if the proposal is to put it on the State (Juvenile Detention Facility) property or my property? I also have a recent video to share with planners that shows how dramatically the creek floods and washes away all things in its path. I am concerned about any gravel or concrete that would be constructed on the flood plain. Thank you!</p>
8	<p>Chapter 14 pays almost no attention to walking as transportation. I submitted lengthy comments via email to planning@chesterfield.gov on this and related issues. I hope they reach you. If not, please email me an appropriate email address to submit them. Thank you, Lindsay Childs</p>
9-14	<p>Dear Planning Department,</p> <p>This email is in response to the request for public comment on the draft of Chapter 14, Bikeways and Trails. My comments are too detailed to fit in the small window provided at https://www.chesterfield.gov/webform.aspx?ekfrm=8590137773 so I am emailing them in the hope that they will be directed appropriately.</p> <p>Thank you, Lindsay Childs</p> <p>-----</p> <p>My main comments on the comprehensive plan, and in particular on the draft Chapter 14, involve the pedestrian environment in the county. I'll begin with that issue, and below will discuss how the pedestrian environment is treated in Chapters 14, 13 and 15 of the Comprehensive Plan. Following that are two other comments, related to neighborhood byways and to public transportation.</p> <p>I. A major issue of concern is that miles of sidewalk have been constructed in the county with little or no thought about whether the sidewalks could actually be used by residents to get to desired destinations. That aspect of planning seems to be missing from the Comprehensive Plan.</p> <p>Along the major arterials and collector roads in the county inventoried by Christopher Lee-- Robious Road, Midlothian Turnpike, Hull Street Road, Huguenot Road, Iron Bridge Road, E/W Hundred Road, Jefferson Davis Highway--about 18 miles are served by sidewalks. In addition, in Midlothian there are sidewalks along Woolridge Road, Charter Colony Parkway, Coalfield Road (north of Woolridge), Mall Road and Cranbeck Road, and Walton Park Drive. Many of these sidewalks are rarely used to reach destinations, not because no one walks, but because the sidewalks are fragmented into pieces by busy intersections with no pedestrian infrastructure.</p> <p>The only place I've found in the county with a safe and thoughtfully designed sidewalk is on the north side of West Hundred Road (Route 10), between Jefferson Davis Highway and the southern end of the Chester Linear Park just east of Womack Road. A 2.5 mile long sidewalk serves C. E. Curtis Elementary School, Thomas Dale High School and the Chester Library. There are highly visible crosswalks and pedestrian countdown timers at five signalized intersections of West Hundred Road: at Osborne Road, Old Centralia Road, Chester Road (Rte. 144 north), Harrowgate Road (Rte. 144 south) and Chestertowne Road. Even some minor roads meeting West Hundred Road have highly visible crosswalks at their intersections with West Hundred Road.</p>

Nothing in chapters 13, 14 or 15 gives any indication that the County is interested in pursuing ways to make the existing sidewalks elsewhere in the county safe for use by the full range of types of pedestrians, "including people who walk or jog, parents walking with strollers, people walking with leashed dogs, hikers and handicapped users" [pre-driving teens should be added], listed on page BT 3 of the draft Chapter 14.

Here is a very partial list of some underused sidewalks.

Hull Street Road, west of 288:

There is a three mile long sidewalk on each side of Hull Street Road west of Route 288. But who from among the various types of pedestrians listed on page BT3 would be able to cross Hull Street Road at any intersection to get from the sidewalk on one side of the highway to the sidewalk on the other side? For example, who could safely walk from the Chesterfield Career and Technical Center to the Clover Hill Library, a half-mile away?

The sidewalks on each side of Hull Street Road are themselves fragmented by intersections with complex signaling. Who would be able to safely cross Winterpock Road or North Spring Run Road from one sidewalk fragment on Hull Street Road to the next? (There are no crosswalks or pedestrian signals anywhere on Hull Street Road in the county.)

Midlothian Turnpike, in the village.

Where could pedestrians cross Midlothian Turnpike anywhere in the Midlothian Village area? The only way the highway can be crossed safely is with the aid of crossing guards in front of Midlothian Middle School. (There are no crosswalks or pedestrian signals anywhere on Midlothian Turnpike in the county.)

Coalfield Road.

Among the senior citizens who live in the Atlantic Apartments at the northwest corner of the Woolridge/Coalfield Road intersection, who would be able to cross Coalfield Road at that intersection to reach the Midlothian Library at the northeast corner of that intersection (a distance of around 800 feet door-to-door)?

Robious Road

There are miles of sidewalk on Robious Road between Old Gun Road and Old Bon Air Road. But the sidewalks end near Huguenot Road, and there is no pedestrian infrastructure at the Mall Road/Cranbeck Road intersection. Who among the types of pedestrians listed above would be able to cross Robious Road between Aldi's and the Belvedere Apartments? Or cross from the sidewalk on Robious Road west of Mall Road to the sidewalk on Robious Road east of Mall Road. for example, carrying a bag of groceries from Aldi's to Clairmont Apartments? Or walk from any of the three large apartment complexes along Robious Road east and within a half mile of the Huguenot-Robious intersection to ACAC on the other side of Huguenot Road?

According to the April 2, 2015 draft of the Bikeways and Trails chapter, only 10 of the 192 signalized intersections in the County had pedestrian countdown timers. Five are on West Hundred Road. Since that time, one was added at Smoketree Drive and Courthouse Road, at the North Courthouse Road Library entrance.

By far the least expensive way for the county to greatly improve walking as transportation would be to add highly visible crosswalks and pedestrian countdown signals to intersections along busy roadways that already have sidewalks, as has been done on West Hundred Road. A good example of what happens when this is done is the pedestrian signal at Robious Road and Polo Parkway. The only pedestrians regularly seen anywhere in the Huguenot/Robious/Midlothian Turnpike area are students who walk from Robious Middle

School to ACAC and the Briarwood neighborhood around 3 pm on school days, using that pedestrian signal to cross Robious Road.

If the sidewalks on Robious Road were continued to Huguenot Road, then it should be possible, with the current signal phasing and without seriously impeding the traffic flow, to add pedestrian signals to the intersection of Huguenot and Robious to make it possible for pedestrians to cross Huguenot Road and Robious Road at that intersection.

In the Comprehensive Plan, the County should include, or at least note the existence of, the census of sidewalks on major arterials in the county, and ask, can they be used safely? If not, what can be done to make them usable?

Related to these comments about pedestrian safety, please see <https://www.treds.virginia.gov/Mapping/Map/CrashesByJurisdiction>

This is an interactive VDOT map showing car crashes by jurisdiction and year during each of the past five years (2013-17). I put in "Chesterfield County" and "Pedestrian Involved" and came up with data that since the beginning of 2013, Chesterfield County has had 194 personal injury crashes involving a pedestrian, and 15 of those involved fatalities.

II. I looked to see how the Comprehensive Plan addresses the pedestrian environment in the County. So along with reading the draft Chapter 14, I also looked at the current versions of Chapter 13: Transportation, and Chapter 15: The Public Facilities Plan.

I found that the Transportation chapter views pedestrian infrastructure as an amenity of very low priority. A key statement (p. 148) is: "the county focuses on providing public sidewalk projects where there is evidence of high pedestrian activity". With the possible exception of Jefferson Davis Highway, there will never be high pedestrian activity in areas where it is dangerous to walk. So that statement suggests that there will continue to be very few public sidewalk projects.

Chapter 13 does support (p. 152) the provision of sidewalks that connect to schools, parks, retail centers, other community facilities and the Linear Parks and Trails system identified in Chapter 15.

Chapter 15 (p. 177) discusses Linear Parks & Trails that incorporate and link appropriate public facilities through sidewalks, trails and other similar accommodations, and specifically lists schools, libraries and parks as appropriate public facilities. On page 211, Chapter 15 refers to Chapter 13 for the Linear Parks and Trails system, and Chapter 13 (p. 148) states that Chapter 14, Bikeways and Trails contains information and recommendations on appropriate facility types and the overall network map.

Thus it seems that any planning related to the location of bicycle or pedestrian infrastructure should be found in Chapter 14.

So I read the Draft Chapter 14, Bikeways and Trails, for any more affirmative interest in walking as transportation. The chapter begins well. On page BT 1: "It is the intent of this chapter to combine transportation and recreation elements of biking and walking to create a safe network to best serve the public." But page BT-6 has the Bikeways and Trails Plan, and at the bottom of page BT 5, it becomes clear that walking for transportation is not a high priority. "Sidewalks are not identified on the map, but the plan does acknowledge the importance of sidewalks in the community. While not preferred, sidewalks can also provide important and safe connections **for people who ride bikes** in certain situations." This sentence on its face demonstrates the strong bias for biking over walking in Chapter 14.

As for walking, Chapter 14 seems to view it as a recreational activity, not as transportation. Page BT-3 introduces walking with the statement, "Walking for pleasure is the predominant form of outdoor activity..."

Nearly all of Chapter 14 addresses issues that relate to recreational biking, with the sole exception of a single sentence on page BT 12: "Major considerations in the development of these guidelines include a safe, accessible, connected and convenient network for people of all ages and abilities that provides walking and biking access to neighborhoods, schools, parks, libraries, places of work and commercial areas." And the chapter contains design guidelines. But there are no details at all about the possible location and safety of pedestrian routes, or discussion of the safety and utility of existing pedestrian infrastructure.

The overall impression of the Chapter 14 draft is that it is predominantly part of the Parks and Recreation master plan, not part of a transportation plan for the county. Except for offering general standards for sidewalk design, issues involved with walking in the county, and in particular, walking on the existing network of sidewalks, are ignored.

So given that the Transportation and Public Facilities chapters defers to the Bikeways and Trails chapter for any details about pedestrian infrastructure, and the Bikeways and Trails chapter doesn't provide any details, where does that leave pedestrian issues in the Comprehensive Plan?

Here are two shorter comments about aspects of walking and biking.

III. An item in the previous Chapter 14 that is missing from this version is any mention of Neighborhood Byways.

Neighborhood Byways is an exciting and potentially low-cost idea for expanding the bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in very significant ways in the county. I can think of two examples that could be made viable in the reasonably near future.

One is a Robious Landing Park to Bon Air Library route. From the park, this would use James River Road, the existing pedestrian signal at Robious Road to reach Twin Team Lane, then use neighborhood streets to reach Salisbury Road at Olde Stonegate Road, follow Salisbury one block to Framar Drive, use an established off-road connector to Pine Bark Lane, then to Wiesinger Lane to Robious Road at Polo Parkway, cross Robious Road at the existing pedestrian signal onto Polo Parkway, then Robious Crossing Drive to Robys Way to Lady Allison Lane to an existing off-road path that connects to the end of Pegwell Drive, then to Woodmont Drive. After crossing Huguenot Road at St. Edward Epiphany School (pedestrian signal needed), the route can use neighborhood streets to reach Rattlesnake Road and the library.

Another is a Pocohantas/Manchester High School/Clover Hill Library/ Walmart network. This would use the planned multiuse path along Winterpock Road from Hull Street Road to Royal Birkdale Drive and then to Spring Run Road, then go 400 feet north on Spring Run Road to reach an existing paved offroad path along the power line ROW to Deer Run Drive at Alberta Smith Elementary. Continuing the route on Chateaugay Lane, Spring Trace Drive and Holly View Parkway, the route could meet the southwestern end of a future multiuse path alongside the projected reconstruction of Bailey Bridgr Road to Manchester High School. From there, an already proposed off-road multiuse path along the Swift Creek

would connect the high school to Pocohantas State Park. Neighborhood streets connect the elementary school with the Clover Hill library,
But I see nothing about neighborhood byways in the new draft of Chapter 14.

IV. Finally, in the General Transportation Guidelines on page 152 of the present Chapter 13, under Sidewalks, is written "Support the provision of sidewalks that connect to schools, parks, retail centers, other community facilities and the Linear Parks and Trails system identified in the Public Facilities Plan chapter". A glaring omission on that "connect to" list is the lack of mention of public transportation. I hope that was an accidental omission. In virtually every case, a trip on public transportation also includes another mode of transportation, typically walking, to reach the transit stop. If sidewalks are not available or usable, then public transportation is not viable. The failure of express bus route 81 between the Lowes parking lot and downtown Richmond, in my view, can be largely blamed on the complete lack of any pedestrian facilities along Huguenot Road.

If the statement on page 135 of Chapter 13 that "a more balanced multimodal transportation system (i. e. multiple modes of transport; for example, automobile, rail and bus) is recommended...", is at all meaningful, then along with that recommendation should be a recommendation to improve the safety and usability of the sidewalk network along any potentially desirable route for public transportation.

Respectfully submitted,
Lindsay N. Childs
August 31, 2017